DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 546 CE 061 778

TITLE	Strategies for Success: Recruiting Students into Nontraditional Programs.
INSTITUTION	Vocational Equity Research, Training and Evaluation Center, Hartford, CT.
SPONS AGENCY	Connecticut State Dept. of Education, Middletown. Div. of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.
PUB DATE	Dec 89
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Involvement; Females; Grade 8; Grade 9; Inservice Education; Junior High Schools; Males; Mass Media; *Nontraditional Occupations; *Parent Participation; *Publicity; Public Relations; *Sex Fairness; Staff Development; State Programs; *Student Recruitment; Vocational Education; Vocational Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*Connecticut

ABSTRACT

This guide is designed as an outline of strategies and activities that could be implemented to encourage students to enter nontraditional occupations. The information and ideas are intended for use by teachers, counselors, and administrators at all educational levels to promote equal and full participation of students in Connecticut's vocational-technical education system. Users are encouraged to customize the techniques to meet their particular educational needs and circumstances. The guide is divided into four sections. Each section provides strategies that have applicability for select audiences or target populations. "Recruitment Activities for Students" contains activities to encourage eighth-grade students in the district schools and ninth-grade students in exploratory programs at the vocational-technical schools. Strategies to eliminate potential barriers to parental involvement are offered. "Community Activities" offers techniques for encouraging community interest and involvement in the vocational schools. "Publicity and Promotional Techniques" suggests activities for use of popular media, including newspapers, television, and radio. "Personnel Activities" details activities to be used to develop an awareness among school personnel of gender equity issues. (YLB)

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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Recruiting Students into Nontraditional Programs

The strategies discussed in this report are based on extensive literature reviews, examination of existing recruitment models nationwide, and review of successful protocols currently in place in vocational schools. The information and ideas can be used by teachers, counselors, and administrators at all educational levels to promote equal and full participation of students in Connecticut's vocational-technical education system.

This guide is divided into four sections: Recruitment Activites for Students; Community Activities; Publicity & Promotional Techniques, and Personnel Activities. Each section provides strategies that have applicability for select audiences or target populations. For example, the second section on community activities offers techniques for encouraging community interest and involvement in the vocational schools.

Readers are encouraged to customize the techniques to meet their particular educational needs and circumstances. In addition, following implementation of these recruitment techniques, an evaluative or follow-up component is recommended. By assessing the relationships between the implementation of particular techniques and changes in school enrollment and participation patterns, the actual efficacy of such strategies can be ascertained. Thereafter, ineffective strategies can be eliminated from a recruitment program, and effective strategies can be promoted.

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Recruitment Activities for Students

There are numerous activities for recruiting students into nontraditional occupations. One popular method involves the use of adult role models. Role models can be used to talk to vocational school students, prospective students, and parents about their trade experiences in nontraditional occupations. Personnel who are recruiting prospective students should take nontraditional role models (either vocational school students, recent v-t graduates, or adult workers) with them on their visits to district schools. These individuals, by relating their own trade experiences, can be instrumental in encouraging prospective students to consider occupations nontraditional for their gender. Another way to encourage enrollments in nontraditional careers is to establish a variety of prevocational programs that expose students to the different trade areas by providing them with hands-on experiences in school shops.

There are two target groups toward whom activities should be directed when recruiting students for nontraditional vocational programs: eighth-grade students in the district schools and ninth-grade students in exploratory programs at the v-t schools. The following activities have been designed to encourage participation by both groups in nontraditional occupations.

Effective strategies for eighth-grade students

- **Have adult role models in nontraditional occupations talk with eighth-grade students about different aspects of their occupations such as trade training and career challenges. Select role models in nontraditional occupations who represent both sexes and who come from a variety of racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds.**

- **Have student role models (presently enrolled in nontraditional occupations at v-t schools) talk with eighth-grade students about trade choices in nontraditional areas. These students could discuss the challenges and barriers they face in their vocational schooling.**

- **Offer an exploratory summer session for students between seventh and eighth grades as a prevocational orientation to nontraditional occupations.**

- **Invite eighth-graders to visit vocational high school classes where nontraditional enrollees can demonstrate a shop lesson and offer hands-on experiences for each student. Provide tours of shop facilities to those students interested in pursuing a nontraditional career.**

- Design an open house to give eighth-grade students and parents an opportunity to visit the v-t schools and learn about the different trade offerings and career opportunities in nontraditional fields.

- Plan a picnic or party for prospective students and their parents. Invite nontraditional students and graduates to attend this function and to be present to answer questions about their trade choices or employment.

- Design family nights during which teachers, counselors, adult, and student role models talk to parents of eighth-grade students about programs in nontraditional careers.

- Develop a career workshop for eighth-grade students. Program content could include films and exhibits about students in nontraditional occupations. Invite adult role models as speakers. Provide information about course requirments and career opportunities in vocational fields.

- Have vocational guidance counselors arrange personal interviews with eighth-grade students who plan to attend the v-t schools. This interview should encourage students to consider nontraditional occupations.

- Have vocational guidance counselors offer presentations to eighth-grade students about males and females in nontraditional vocational education.

Effective strategies for ninth-grade exploratory students

- Ensure that <u>all</u> students have an opportunity to explore shop courses that are nontraditional for their gender.

- Provide ninth-grade students with complete and accurate salary projections and information about the realities of their future economic position. In addition, inform students of the variety of jobs available in different trade areas and provide accurate descriptions of the training necessary for particular skills.

- Arrange for a spokesperson in a nontraditional trade to prepare a brief explanation of their craft and its accompanying problems and rewards.

- Develop enrichment classes for ninth-grade vocational students who want nontraditional shops. These classes should be conducted during the school day as academic enrichment in students' trade assignments. One option would be to design a "math anxiety" clinic for ninth-grade females entering nontraditional occupations who would benefit from additional academic enrichment.

- **Require an equity workshop for all students in ninth-grade vocational classes. This workshop should orient students to sex-role stereotyping in vocational education. Furthermore, students should be educated about sexual harassment and ways to overcome it. Offer a "sensitivity" lesson using role-playing techniques to foster greater gender awareness.**

- **Arrange field trips for ninth-grade students to visit job sites and talk with industry representatives as well as workers in nontraditional occupations.**

Parental Involvement

Parents play an important role in student's choice of a v-t school and a trade area. In order to involve parents effectively in the recruiting process, it is important to eliminate potential barriers to their participation. The following strategies are offered:

- **Ensure that non-English-speaking parents receive written invitations to school functions in their native language.**

- **Transportation may be a problem for some parents. Consider providing van service or locating school-related meetings in accessible neighboorhood sites.**

- **Provide childcare at school functions.**

- **Schedule meetings during hours compatible with parental non-work hours. More than one meeting may need to be scheduled to accommodate parents who work different shifts.**

- **Depending on the school community, it may be useful to have bilingual presentations at recruitment programs.**

Community Activities

Vocational-technical schools need to solicit support from their communities in order to gather resources which can enhance recruitment efforts. Schools can benefit from partnerships with local business and industry as well as community and technical colleges. In order to involve community members and local groups in the recruitment efforts of the v-t schools several strategies are offered:

* **Include members of both sexes on school advisory committees in order to ensure gender-balanced representation in vocational education.**

* **Organize a committee of adults in nontraditional careers as a support group and advisory body for vocational students enrolled in nontraditional programs.**

* **Establish a speakers' bureau comprised of people in nontraditional occupations who are willing to visit the campus to give lectures and career advice.**

* **Seek the assistance of women's community organizations when planning programs about nontraditional occupations or workshops on sex equity.**

* **Make presentations at PTA or other parent group meetings on recruitment of students into nontraditional occupations. If the vocational school has employed a sex equity coordinator, have that person make speeches to different groups in the community, such as churches, on nontraditional occupations. Otherwise have vocational guidance counselors perform this function.**

* **Organize collaborative arrangements with local businesses willing to provide part-time employment or internships for twelfth-grade vocational school students in nontraditional fields.**

* **Organize collaborative arrangements with local college officials to encourage vocational students in nontraditional occupations to consider postsecondary technical education. Offer field trips to state technical and community colleges. Invite college representatives to present information on the advantages of having an advanced degree in a technical field.**

Publicity & Promotional Techniques

Vocational-technical schools can increase their recruitment activities through the use of publicity and promotional techniques such as newspapers, television, and radio. These popular media are the most successful ways of reaching potential student enrollees and their parents. The following are suggested activities to enhance student recruitment:

- **Create vocational program brochures focusing upon students in nontraditional careers. These brochures could be taken to the district schools, distributed at recruitment activities, and given to entering ninth-grade students. All materials, language, and pictures should include both males and females of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Ensure that all publicity materials include pictures of nontraditional students and minorities who are actively engaged in their training.**

- **Develop a slide show which depicts vocational students working in nontraditional occupations to be used for a variety of recruitment purposes.**

- **Develop a set of tape-recorded interviews or video tapes with students in nontraditional fields to be used for recruitment purposes.**

- **Place news releases in the local press about the achievements and activities of nontraditional vocational students. Utilize neighborhood newspapers and newspapers for non-English-speaking readers.**

- **Use vocational school student newspapers to provide information about current offerings in vocational programs in nontraditional fields. Provide updates on career placements for students and list activities of former students (alumni) in nontraditional fields. Editions of this paper can be displayed at recruitment events and mailed to prospective students.**

- **Create/organize school bulletin boards depicting students working in nontraditional occupations.**

- **Display recruitment posters throughout the school depicting males and females in nontraditional careers. Place posters in prominent locations such as entry ways, cafeterias, and other high traffic areas.**

- **Send out newsletters to families in the community who have eighth-grade children to provide them details about v-t education and career opportunities in nontraditional fields.**

- **Design exhibitions in shopping malls to encourage students and their parents to consider nontraditional occupations. Involve the business community in securing donations of publicity materials, promotional give-aways, and demonstration models.**

Personnel Activities

Faculty, counselors, and administrators at v-t schools need to be apprised of their responsibilites in the overall recruitment process, especially in the area of gender-balanced vocational education. The following activities can be used to develop an awareness among school personnel of gender equity issues:

- **Dedicate inservice days on general equity issues and offer staff workshops on sex-role stereotyping and vocational education.**

- **Provide teachers with information on how to counter sex bias and its effects in their particular trade areas.**

- **Provide inservice programs for teachers and counselors in order to assist them in working with nontraditional students.**

- **Hold instructors accountable for the atmosphere in their shops; harassment incidents should be documented in yearly teaching evaluations.**

- **Reward and acknowledge teachers who have developed effective strategies for ensuring equitable participation in their learning environments.**

- **Emphasize to vocational teachers the importance of the ninth-grade exploratory program in recruiting students to nontraditional occupations.**

- **Invite adult role models in nontraditional trades to attend inservice workshops for teachers and counselors in order to provide information about nontraditional careers.**

- **Sponsor a luncheon for district school guidance staff and directors, using this occasion to provide information on vocational programs and opportunities in nontraditional fields.**

Conclusion

This guide was designed as an outline of strategies and activities that could be implemented to encourage students to enter nontraditional occupations. While numerous ideas have been suggested, the effectiveness of any one is a function of the implementation method, the timing of the activity, and the nature of the communities and personnel involved. Therefore, it is only through a process of ongoing evaluation that administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and staff can accurately ascertain which strategies have the greatest benefit.

Those who are truly committed to recruiting nontraditional students are encouraged to use a multifaceted approach by incorporating a variety of techniques, experimenting with alternative strategies, and designing unique campaigns. Such an eclectic approach not only increases the potential for success but also ensures a dynamic, ever-evolving recruitment process.

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VERTEC is funded by a grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Education,
Division of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education
December, 1989

Logo Design by: Richard Pinchera